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15 Characteristics Of Today's Unchurched Person

By Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/author/carey/>) | 161

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(<https://careynieuwhof.com/2013/04/15-characteristics-of-todays-unchurched-person/unchurched/>)

If you're like many Christians, you have an authentic desire to share your faith with people who don't yet follow Jesus. I know I do.

One of my deepest longings is that every person would come to know the love and salvation that Jesus extends to them.

Our vision at Connexus (<http://www.connexuscommunity.com/>), where I serve as lead pastor, is to be a church that unchurched people love to attend – a vision we share with all North Point strategic partner churches (<http://www.northpoint.org/>).

But unchurched people are changing.

Even since I started ministry 18 years ago, there's been a big shift in how unchurched people think. Particularly here in Canada, we are a bit of a hybrid between the US and Europe. Canadians are less 'religious' than Americans, but less secular than Europeans.

Gabe Lyons and David Kinnaman have outlined helpful characteristics of unchurched people in *UnChristian* (http://www.amazon.com/unChristian-Generation-Really-Christianity-Matters/dp/0801072719/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1365159570&sr=8-3&keywords=david+kinnaman) and David tackled it again in *You Lost Me* (http://www.amazon.com/You-Lost-Christians-Church-Rethinking/dp/0801013143/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1365159654&sr=1-1&keywords=you+lost+me). I won't repeat those characteristics here. (Both books are fantastic reads.)

Post-modernism has a deeper toe-hold here than in almost anywhere in America except perhaps the Northwest and New England, where it might be about the same.

Here are characteristics of unchurched people that I'm seeing today.

1. They don't all have big 'problems.' If you're waiting for unchurched people to show up because their life is falling apart, you might wait a long time. Sure, there are always people in crisis who seek God out. But many are quite content with their lives without God. And some are quite happy and successful. If you only know how to speak into discontent and crisis, you will miss most of your neighbours.

2. They feel less guilty than you think. They don't feel any more guilty about not being in church on Sunday than you feel guilty about not being in synagogue on Saturdays. How many Saturdays do you feel badly about missing synagogue? That's how many Sundays they feel badly about missing church.

3. Occasional is regular. When they start coming, they don't always attend every week. Giving them easy, obvious and strategic steps to get connected is important. Disconnected people generally don't stick. (I wrote more about the declining frequency of church attendance (<https://careynieuwhof.com/2013/04/7-ways-to-respond-as-people-attend-church-less-often/>) here.)

4. Most are spiritual. Most unchurched people believe in some kind of God. They're surprised and offended if you think of them as atheists. As they should be.

5. They are not sure what "Christian" means. So you need to make that clear. You really can't make any assumptions about what people understand about the Christian faith. Moving forward, clarity is paramount.

6. You can't call them back to something they never knew. Old school 'revival' meant there was something to revive. Now that we are on the 2nd to 5th generation of unchurched people, revival is less helpful to say the least. You can't call them back to something they never knew.

7. Many have tried church, even a little, but left. We have a good chunk of people who have never ever been to church (60% of our growth is from people who self-identify as not regularly attending church), but a surprising number of people have tried church at some point – as a kid or young adult. Because it wasn't a good experience, they left. Remember that.

8. Something is generous. Because even giving 10% of your income to anything is radically countercultural, the only paradigm of giving they have is a few dozen or hundred dollars to select charities. I hope every Christian learns to live a life of sacrifice and generosity, but telling them they are ungenerous is a poor way to start the conversation. They are probably already more generous than their friends.

9. They want you to be Christian. They want you to follow Jesus, authentically. Think about it, if you were going to convert to Buddhism, you would want to be an authentic Buddhist, not some watered down version. Andy Stanley is 100% right (<https://careynieuwhof.com/2013/03/21-key-learnings-from-andy-stanley-and-the-drive-conference/>) when he says you don't alter the content of your services for unchurched people, but you should change the experience.

10. They're intelligent, so speak to that. Don't speak down to them. Just make it easy to get on the same page as people who have attended church for years by saying "this passage is near the middle of the bible." You can be inclusive without being condescending.

11. They hate hypocrisy. Enough said.

12. They love transparency. When you share your weaknesses, everyone (including Christians) resonates.

13. They invite their friends if they like what they're discovering. They will be your best inviters if they love what you're doing.

14. Their spiritual growth trajectory varies dramatically. One size does not fit all. You need a flexible on ramp that allows people to hang in the shadows for a while as they make up their mind, and one that allows multiple jumping in points throughout the year.

15. Some want to be anonymous and some don't. So make your church friendly to both.



Previous point. This is huge.
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What are you seeing? What describes your friends and the people you're reaching at your church? Let's grow this list.

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7 Things Lead Pastors Wish They Could Say to Worship Leaders - CareyNieuwhof.com (<https://careynieuwhof.com/7-things-lead-pastors-wish-they-could-say-to-worship-leaders/>) on April 26, 2018 at 6:18 am

[...] because they are “into” worship in their personal life. Our goal is to engage those people who come in late and stand near the back of the auditorium with a cup of coffee in hand. Sometimes I think it might be interesting to record a video of the [...]

Reply

@s.wakefield (<http://portcitytacoma.com>) on October 6, 2017 at 3:15 pm

Love this article. Something else I'm seeing is that unchurched people in my area are highly perceptive when it comes to church planters and pastors who are just meeting and befriending them with the intention of inviting them to their “thing.” People can tell when they are just a project to pastors and christians and I think we would do well to be aware of that feeling that many unchurched people have.

Reply

Eric Robinson on April 25, 2017 at 9:07 am

A great article, being a leader in an Evangelical non Denominational Canadian Church I can identify with all of the points you bring out. We have and are experiencing everyone of them. Programs and more programs are just not working. Saying that, I have personally found that the encouragement and acceptance to be and do whatever you want over the past couple of decades fulled by the progressive Libertarian mindset to be at the root of Christianities shaking. The goal is to destroy Christianity and we are seeing the positive results they are reaping. Family structures collapsing, Government forcing acceptance of immorality upon the adults with laws and in the schools brainwashing the next generations unchecked. There is a real Spiritual battle in progress and I find the mainly Denominational Church's have been asleep, unwilling to fight back. One Church is what Christianity is supposed to be but in reality the enemy has successfully divided "the Church" and is conquering. Church is not a building as already posted, "WE" are the Church, each individual person. As one, in Faith, together we can win the souls of mankind for Jesus but divided we are failing miserably. If we are Christians then our Words and Actions should reflect Christ to the World.

Reply

ready on February 10, 2017 at 6:41 pm

Coming to God is a lot like getting a great education or finding a great job or spouse. You must first believe that "IT" exists. Until you believe, you will never act on the urges you experience towards those needs. When I hear someone say they don't like or want to discuss

a topic, yet they have done a considerable amount of reading on the subject; that to me is a sign they want to discuss "it" even more. Words have implications and it is by our own words that we allow others with the perception, to look in to our deeper mind. Most people who claim to be atheists are not really, but they do put up a good facade. After talking with them on a different themes they reveal in their own words why they feel and thus blame God for betraying them. For some it was a divorce of their own or their parents. Death of someone close, before their time. Finances, lost opportunities or the betrayal of a close friend. In other words, there is a trigger that got pulled and because their faith was weak to begin with they closed God out. The flame is not completely out, because their thoughts of God never really leave their mind. consciously or subconsciously. In fact, they are often drawn to discussions hoping they will hear something that will revive that smoldering ember one last time. God Bless, keep the faith!

Reply

Mike on May 2, 2017 at 2:02 am

"Most people who claim to be atheists are not really..."

Not from my experience, or not for the reasons you suggest, and many of my friends would consider themselves as such. You say that "they have closed god out" and yet in most cases god was never there to begin with and there is no acceptance of the

concept so the argument is therefore completely wrong.

There are other reasons for saying no-one is really an atheist. The main one used revolves around what it means to believe something and that there is no such thing as certainty. Most atheist friends will say that they see no evidence for the existence of a god. This therefore leaves the door open should that evidence arise. This however is a semantic argument about definitions and what it means to believe something. Perhaps a belief can be defined as something you think is 99% likely to be correct – or 98 or whatever. Whenever I use the word I'm really saying, 'the evidence suggests that' or 'strongly suggests that' etc

The other argument is more fundamental and I'm in this category. The concept of atheism is a content-less space. It makes no sense to define yourself in terms of the negative of something you don't think exists. Personally if someone asks me 'do you believe in god I ask 'define god'. Weak pantheists say that god is simply the universe and its laws which many 'atheists' would accept most likely exists. Hence I'd prefer the term Ignostic (if I'm to be labeled at all, something I resist) originally known as theological noncognitivist.

Perhaps in light of this I find point 4 above to be quite arrogant and offensive.

Reply

Mark Henri on June 27, 2016 at 3:38 pm

I'd add Teach The Basics. I've been a Christian for a long time and finally really got prayer/intercession. It would embarrassing for me to talk about this as I'm heavily into worship ministry and really should have known better. I now know that most people just assumed I knew because I play guitar and don't talk much. Back to CHRISTIANITY 101...

Walter Martin has that book Essential Christianity that spells it all out in about 80 pages. It's not really a deep read. I was absolutely blown away that a couple of people who serve as volunteers were confused about reincarnation and actually thought that it had something to do with Christianity! Another thinks he needs to tell gay people that they're living in sin but doesn't understand that his porn addiction is roughly the same thing (fornication if you don't know). I know it seems absurd but the pastor has been so busy mining the depths of scriptural nuance that he's omitted teaching how the trinity actually works or what constitutes heresy.

Reply

Amber on May 27, 2016 at 10:46 am

Also, these days, too many Christians live in a bubble: Christian ghetto from cradle to grave. These circles are impossible to break into, even as a Christian myself coming in who went to secular schools. We send our children to secular (public) school and they always end up feeling alienated and alone in a sea of children all going to local Christian private schools. I have to state: moving the location of your Church to a movie theatre or something like that is just silly. The problem is not the building. The problem is the people and a suffocating, irrelevant Christian culture that speaks down to people. I also think "Care Groups" are a problem. You enter a new Church and everyone is all clustered in their little groups, hardly anyone is looking out for new people. Why in the world would we ever, ever want to join a Care Group if no one even speaks to us on a Sunday morning? That paradigm is totally failing. Also, you can get stuck in a Care Group with people who really couldn't care less about you—with leaders who have no talent for leading.

Reply

Stanley Zantarski on August 2, 2016 at 3:43 pm

Amber, you're right. People join a new church and they are either lost in a sea of choices, ignored, or join some small group. Christian Churches need to be much more dynamic with 40 minutes of service dedicated to fellowshipping, members speaking freely to other members. The pastor needs to field questions from the pews, answer them when he can and/or let other members answer them. Also, members who have

families love it(much of the time). What happens if you lost touch with family and friends? Showing up for two hours of mass and two hours of small group won't cut it. The churches are not taking care of the "widows and orphans." They include people who are disabled and those who are alone and vulnerable. "Whenever you failed to do it to the "least" of my brothers, you failed to do it for me." Matthew 25:45

Reply

Ellen on April 24, 2016 at 9:16 am

#14 and #15 are big ones for me which are probably the biggest reasons why I hate it when my friend from high school bugs me to go to church with her. When I have gone to church with in the past she has always pushed me by putting me on the spot. Personally, I hate when churches feel that they need to announce visitors and have them stand. I do not like spotlight, period. When I have gone to a church for the first time, I don't like being pushed into making a decision to join right away. All that really does is make me feel too uncomfortable to even come back to that church. If churches would use the more laid-back approach and allow people to attend freely, it would not be so bad. My experience has taught me that when trying something new, you will either give something a second chance, or not. There are times when I do try something the first time, I will give it second chance if I

think that there is a chance that it could be different the next time because of the culture of people, or the thought that maybe it was a bad week, etc. But if on the second try, if it is the same as the last week, then I won't be back.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 25, 2016 at 4:51 am

I can empathize Ellen. I'm a church goer and I cringe if I get asked to stand because I'm new. Hopefully we get better at those things and make the church more welcoming.

Reply

Shannon on February 12, 2016 at 9:11 pm

I used to go to church but i don't anymore. Why?

A.) They insist on having it on 8am on a Sunday. Noon works just as well, people.

B.) Everything's a #(^_#^ musical. The only thing worse than being forced to a roomful of untrained people bellowing to elevator music is them trying to get me to join in. Get this – I. Don't. Sing. I don't like it. I'm not good at it. I'm not going to do it.

C.) Sitting down in the back and having them practically shine a spotlight on you. I don't want to come up closer, I'm fine right where I am, thanks! No, I don't need you to welcome the newcomer, if I wanted to be the center of attention I'd be at the podium.

D.) Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. Sit down. What is this, pilates?

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 25, 2016 at 4:52 am

You raise some good points...and you're funny. Thanks.

Reply

Mark Henri on June 27, 2016 at 3:44 pm

Thanks. I've been trying to tell leadership that bombastic musicals are not a good strategy. I even wrote an online book on it. I hate it when leaders come to me all upset that half the people aren't singing. It's OK. They don't need to be cajoled or "motivated". They took time out of their day to come to church. That's a big deal. Let them participate at whatever level they want.

My current church starts at 11 AM and it's nice not to have to be up at 5:30 AM to get to a 7 AM rehearsal and then be there for 8 hours.

This is another one of those things where I have to remind myself that Jesus wasn't a Christian.

-The Guitar Player

Reply

huwwuh on December 26, 2015 at 11:27 pm

Use of the term unchurched is a sign of the ignorance of the author. Acts 2:47"and Adonay added to the ecclesia daily such as should be saved". He did so then and He does so today and every day.

It is a term favoured by proselytes and is usually aimed at the regenerate. Who, having the guidance of the Spirit, question the forms of religion that are taught by the 41,000 denominations.

Reply

Don on March 20, 2018 at 11:22 am

So what term would you recommend?

Reply

Jack on July 17, 2015 at 8:26 am

There's a real "us" vs. "them" feeling when words like "unchurched" are used. It implies the person is defective in some way. And then there's the vague Church Covenants that are all the rage, often with a statement "I will follow the leaders", "I will not be disruptive" – legally binding documents that state church discipline will follow if the rules are not. Church discipline is never defined. In addition to the overt political agendas, there's also the implication if you believe in anything other than some version of young earth creationism

you are not a "true Christian". Also the expectation that you will start to think of your non-christian friends as the "unchurched". There's more but that's a start as to why many "unchurched" opt out. Among evangelical churches this attitude seems to be getting worse. Used to attend until about 10 years ago when the membership covenant appeared and the Sunday school started pushing young earth creationism on the kids.

Reply

Ellen on July 6, 2015 at 6:00 pm

Interesting points, and I am glad that there are pastors who can relate to and understand why not everyone goes to church. I have gone to few churches with a friend of mine, and it is always the same thing. She didn't like that I wasn't going to church, so she would bug me to go to her church. I did go to her Lutheran church when she was Lutheran, and I felt pushed into joining right away. Then I was pushed into going to catechism, getting confirmed, next the youth group, softball. I felt that the more I did, the less I felt appreciated. Just like others have mentioned on this blog, I did not feel at all connected to anyone in the church in spite of spending so much time there. People wanted me to volunteer, then act frustrated if I said no. My friend would have a hard time with #9, #14 and #15. She has always expected me to conform to her beliefs, she apparently does not believe that everyone has their own path. She always liked to put me on the spot, no matter how embarrassed I was. She believes that

if you are not a Christian, you are automatically going to hell, period. This hasn't helped our friendship, it has actually drove us apart. I converted to the Catholic Church in my young adult years, and she isn't too pleased with that either.

I think that if churches would try to pay more attention to people's needs, they might get better results and make more significant friends in church. I think that #12 is important. I feel that whenever I was in church groups, people are a closed book. Some believe that when you are in church, you are supposed to act happy and everything is according to God's plan. I think that if people would be more open about a few things about themselves, then more relevant relationships can form. I would more likely remember a person if he shared something about himself than just church.

Reply

Jason on April 15, 2015 at 3:01 pm

I'm interested in #14 – do you mean multiple jump-in points such as events they can volunteer for? Or are you talking more about getting more involved in Bible studies?

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 15, 2015 at 4:24 pm

Hey Jason...a few strategic jumping in points is what I mean. Not everyone's ready for Bible study right away.

[Reply](#)



Barbara on May 1, 2016 at 7:46 am

I, too am interested in examples of “strategic jumping in points”, which I imagine would include community outreach events, but specific things that have worked would be very helpful! Also, how to get demographic info about the community surrounding a church’s location? Other jumping in points must include volunteer opportunities, weekly small group meetings in peoples’ homes, music and liturgical dance and play practices; any others? Thank you.

[Reply](#)



mikehorn on February 21, 2015 at 8:56 pm

16: Politics disguised as religion is complete BS, to the point of being fundamentally anti-democracy. Once politics becomes a matter of someone being with God and by definition the other against God, then democratic debate is destroyed. Good people can disagree about important things and remain good people. Demonization of your political opponents should remain the Provence of a shooting war, not the election cycle in your own country. If the church resembles a subsidized recruitment center for the Republican Party, you're doing it wrong.

[Reply](#)

momof2boysons on January 17, 2015 at 2:22 pm

How do you incorporate local and national and international outreach or mission? Sharing the Gospel is asked of Jesus followers.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on January 17, 2015 at 3:05 pm

Great question. The international approach to mission is very different. This is just about local mission, which is a focus of mine.

[Reply](#)

RobS on October 14, 2014 at 12:01 pm

Good post. The #6 really hit home. In the south, there's more of a church culture — where calling people back seems to be more of a winning strategy. As one goes further north (and into Canada), it becomes less so and strategies and experiences need to change to engage people.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on November 15, 2014 at 8:11 am

So true Rob!

Reply

Team Jayne & Chris on October 11, 2014 at 4:29 pm

I am so thankful I am unchurched and that more and more people are leaving religion. My greatest wish in the world is for everybody to understand that gods are man made.

Reply

Brandon on October 14, 2014 at 2:35 pm

Carol I'm just going to believe that if you are on a Christian site, you have some desire to connect or reconnect with God. I want you to know that he desires the same for you and it is my prayer that you would see the other side of your belief, instead of pushing yours upon us. Love you with God's love and have a great day.

Reply

Carol on October 14, 2014 at 2:38 pm

No definitely not. I ended up on a Christian site from some link. I have never been happier than when I learned that god wasn't real. No more stress.

[Reply](#)

Brandon on October 14, 2014 at 5:47 pm

But you read the article. You're not fooling me! ;) He's real, otherwise why would I care about you? I respect your right to believe what you want, but respect ours too. Belief is a right, I believe God gave you. If you choose to not believe, again I respect that. But I choose to pray for you to come home. Respect that. I'd love to chat further with you if you ever desire.
Dbrandoncampbell@gmail.com (<mailto:Dbrandoncampbell@gmail.com>) if not, be well on your journey. :)

[Reply](#)

Carol on October 14, 2014 at 8:38 pm

I read the article. He is not real. I respect peoples right to believe anything they want UNTIL it affects others around them. Religion has a horrible negative effect on the entire world. You can pray all you want. It does nothing and I am home. I am a much better person than most Christians that I know and I'm so happy to be away from that nonsense.

Brandon on October 15, 2014 at 8:58 am

If you're happy, why "stumble" upon the website, read the article and have dialogue with me? If you don't care and you only have an issue when it affects other people, aren't you doing the exact same thing? I'm sorry, your argument, though passionate, doesn't hold up. You have a pull towards God. And you'll be saved again. I believe it. Save my email, cause I want the testimony. :)

Have a great one.

P.S. Saying you're better than most Christians means you should be one, and help us out.

McWhaaa?? on October 15, 2014 at 11:49 am

Sorry but I didn't stumble on your website. I have many friends who are Christian and they post things on Facebook. I am a smart person and smart people read things. Do you think that because I'm an atheist that I read nothing that is about Christianity?? I have no pull towards gods other than an interest in how people can possibly believe in them! I've taken religious history classes which I would recommend for you too. It's very interesting to learn about all the different religions.

Sorry but I won't be saved. I will live my life doing what I know is right. No thanks to being a Christian. Been there, done that, never again. My greatest wish remains that people figure out what a scam all religion is and it dies. It won't happen in my lifetime unfortunately.

You have a great day also.

Eric Seidelman on November 29, 2014 at 3:38 pm

As an intelligent Christian, I have come to realize that the same reasons people DO believe in a god, are the same atheists use to NOT believe in a god. You can't appeal to scientific evidence, you can't appeal to history, you can't appeal to hypocrisy, you can't appeal to emotional hype. Both have claims on both sides. The ultimate reason for doing anything regarding belief is personal experience. As you have said, you tried Christianity and it "didn't work." Well it does for me. It reveals beauty, and reality to me in a way that absolutely works for me. It's changed me into a person, a good person I could never have been without its influence. It inspires me to act in the world (even if I don't actually act). It connects me with people across racial, age, sex, gender-identiy, and historical barriers for a common-ish cause. Religions that we have right now may die. But not all. The religion of science is alive and well, and it makes me really worried when people who shove their scientism in my face can't grasp it for what it is: unverified fidelity to a system of belief that hasn't and can't explain everything.

Wha??? on November 30, 2014 at 12:00 am

It certainly explains things much better than religion does.

Andrew on December 17, 2014 at 8:51 am

I very much enjoyed that. Thank you and god blesd



Cathy Staunton Misciagna on May 29, 2015 at 7:09 pm

To respond to your curiosity about how people can possibly believe in God... I have a number of scientific, historical, anthropological, and literary reasons why I believe that God is real, He created the universe, Jesus rose from the dead, and the Bible has tremendous internal as well as external validity. From the evidence, I think rejecting Christianity as mere myth rather irrational.

Bonnie on July 13, 2015 at 5:05 am

Jesus is no scam.

I see no-one else offering me eternal life for FREE, do you?
Look up the Romans audio study on the nogreaterjoy . org website and find out what Jesus accomplished.

All I know is that I was going to die and He saved me by giving me eternal life so I will never really die. And it was all FREE!

Shannon on February 12, 2016 at 9:06 pm

More likely you're one of those atheists who aren't happy unless they're pissing all over someone else.

Sister Stelly on February 12, 2016 at 11:20 pm

Nope. Believe whatever fairy tale you want.

Shannon on February 14, 2016 at 1:56 pm

Wow...denying it and then proving it in seven words flat. That's gotta set a record for hypocrisy. Craig T Nelson's gonna be pissed that he's no longer in Guiness. I know a lot of Bible-thumpers who are going to want lessons from you.

Sister Stelly on February 14, 2016 at 2:41 pm

That doesn't even make sense. Go sit in your pew and leave the rest of us who know the truth alone.



mikehorn on February 21, 2015 at 9:03 pm

The issue is that what you believe affects the rest of us when that religious belief turns into election issues. More and more, christianity in America is associated with right-wing politics, and venomously demonizes anything else.

Of course it is of interest. Opposition research, understanding of others, being knowledgeable about those you disagree with.

Bonnie on July 13, 2015 at 5:07 am

There is no stress knowing Jesus has granted me eternal life for FREE!!!!

Reply

Sister Stelly on July 13, 2015 at 10:30 am

I know that we are all the same when we die. There is nothing. There is no such thing as eternal life. If it makes you feel better to believe then do so but don't talk about it like it is real.

Reply

Mark Henri on June 27, 2016 at 4:08 pm

OMG, that's an epic post on this blog!!! I love the little nun avatar too... very effective. The nice thing about the 'Imagine' philosophy is that one can make themselves God. The other thing is that you're probably a lot less of a hypocrite than I am. In fact, I'm even quite duplicitous at times. I guess that's just one of the many pitfalls of trying to live to some impossible-to-attain higher standard though? There's a book by Karen Armstrong called The Case for God that you'll love. In it, she blasts the trinity and says basically the same thing—mankind invented God. Of course, it's outside of "The Way" but it will give you lots of ammo for confounding unschooled Christians. Karen is even an-ex nun. Woohoo!

You've made a huge mistake below though when you say "I know..." That would constitute inventing a new religion and I thought you said you're leaving religion? OK, now I'm confused—it seems like you have faith after all?

[Reply](#)

Robert Hartzell (<http://roberthartzell.com>) on September 10, 2014 at 2:17 pm

Great post Carey! This really puts it all together in a good way. We should all keep these in mind. Thanks!

[Reply](#)

Carey on September 12, 2014 at 11:26 am

Thank you so much Robert!

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 21, 2014 at 5:39 pm

Thanks Robert!

[Reply](#)

Ed on July 19, 2014 at 10:31 pm

After pastoring a number of years I have started serving Celebrate Jesus, a nonprofit that partners with local churches with the purpose of helping churches connect with the community around them. I'm using your blogs like a training manual. My experiences of prayer walks, meeting people where they live, where they work, praying with/for those people and then connecting them with church people who will love them like Jesus loves... well, it doesn't get any better than that! Thanks for the blog.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof on July 20, 2014 at 4:07 pm

Ed...this is so encouraging. Thank you! And thank you for how you're serving and leading. Sounds amazing.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 21, 2014 at 5:39 pm

Ed...thanks so much for the encouragement! So appreciate it!

Reply

Redsilas77 on July 15, 2014 at 1:18 pm

#6 and #7 hit me to a tee. I grew up Catholic, but never 'felt' anything. I went through the motions of the service because I was required to, even going through Confirmation. I never once 'felt' anything during my time in the Catholic church. As my mom was the piano/choir accompanist, she got a job at another church, and I was exposed to Missouri Synod Lutheran and later Evangelical Lutheran. When I was posted overseas, I tried the Anglican church in the UK as a way to try getting back into church.

Didn't matter what denomination I went to, I never felt anything during a single service. I prayed for something, any way of God or Jesus letting me know I was doing the right thing and hoping I would get something out of going to church service. I never did, despite years of trying different denominations, and even giving a Catholic service a go again.

Every church I've attended, with the exception of one, had groups of cliques that I just couldn't break through or be a part of. Since I was the new person, I felt I had to 'earn' the privilege of being a part of a group, as everyone else had been members for years in those particular churches. We left (my husband and I) left our last church because we were constantly being pushed to volunteer as new members for various activities while never feeling like we were a part of the larger group. There were other little reasons that I did not feel comfortable being around certain people in the congregation, but my husband had enough and was being pressured to volunteer helping out in the church on a consistent basis.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on July 15, 2014 at 6:12 pm

I don't know your name, but I'm glad you shared your story. Thanks for that. I'm sorry it seems like the same thing over and over again.

This is just a thought...I could be totally off base. But I know sometimes I'm a little shy in crowds and feel like I don't fit in. (People who know me find that hard to believe but it's true). And sometimes I need to remind myself that it's not the other people who are

hesitant to receive me, but it's me who is hesitant to connect with them. Not sure if that's in play here, but if that's your experience in every church, it might be worth praying about exploring.

Either way I wish you well and hope the connection happens sooner!

Reply

Redsilas77 on July 18, 2014 at 1:38 pm

Thank you! My first name is Rachel. My husband and I are shy, but before we were without kids attending services before, now with two toddlers, our free time is extremely limited. Reflecting back, a lot has to do with churches trying to pigeonhole (not a great word, but it will do) us to participate in groups just because we have expertise or talent in a certain area. I was a music major and grew up around a church choir, so I was consistently being pressured to either sing in the choir, join handbells, or play 'special music' during the services. After most of my youth and young adulthood spent already providing that service, I wanted to actually feel what it was like to sit in the congregation for once. My husband was a former landscaper and now a finance specialist, and although he

already does finance and accounting for a living, he was being pressured into providing the same services at each church we attended, which he would love to do when he retires, but not now.

When churches hear that we want to sit in the congregation for once and don't want to volunteer right away, it's almost as if we get thrown into the 'they won't help with anything, so why bother'.

We'll give another church another chance down the road, but we need to wait until our kids are a bit older (as most churches don't have a nursery....or a nursery attendant that we trust). I know we'll heal and find a church that we feel comfortable in.

Reply



Carey Nieuwhof on July 20, 2014 at 4:11 pm

Rachel...I wish you lived near us. We'd love to have you join us. I think people need space to engage their journey at their own pace. I hope you find a great church where you can learn and grow and eventually become involved as you're ready. Don't give up!

[Reply](#)

Ann A. Jones on March 21, 2016 at 6:16 pm

Gosh, I have a totally different experience! I have been into church music all my life, some training, not much college. But I have been told that my talents and skills are not wanted because I am too classical and too good. Basically after all those years, I have been told to sit down and shut up. The music that is done in most churches hardly seems worth the effort anyway, and I find that I just sit and grind my teeth. Different people have different takes on music. I get it. We can hardly force ourselves to go anymore.

[Reply](#)

guest on September 21, 2014 at 2:33 pm

Cliques are a huge problem. I think it worsened with Generation X and the Millennials. I don't think my parents' generation had much difficulty finding a church where they belonged and were able to forge friendships and community. Now, 'though, every

church is a fossilized collection of cliques. Better to join a brand new church plant, if you can find one in your area. Then you'll "be in on the ground floor", which is basically the only way in.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 21, 2014 at 5:39

pm

You raise some good points. I would say that I've seen existing churches overcome some major obstacles and become welcoming communities to all. Whenever that happens, I cheer!

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 21, 2014 at 5:41 pm

I am so sorry to hear your story and I'm so glad you've kept trying. I can understand the discouragement. I wish the experience was different and I hope...and pray...you find a great church. I really do. Thanks for your courage to keep believing and trying.

[Reply](#)

15 Characteristics of Unchurched Today | Leadingchurch.com (<http://paulvanderklay.wordpress.com/2014/05/22/15-characteristics-of-unchurched-today/>) on May 22, 2014 at 3:55 pm

[...] Carey Nieuwhof [...]

[Reply](#)

"Prayer Works" and 2 Other Things Christians Should STOP Saying Now – Changing the Face of Christianity (<http://www.changingthefaceofchristianity.com/christian-maturity/prayer-works-and-2-other-things-christians-should-stop-saying-now/>) on May 4, 2014 at 7:51 pm

[...] The number of people who never go to church or follow Jesus keeps growing. And their thinking keeps changing too (I've outlined 15 characteristics of unchurched people here). [...]

[Reply](#)

Riley on May 1, 2014 at 2:51 pm

We shouldn't be "altering the experience" to fit the tastes of the unchurched, either, but instead invited them to authentic Christian worship.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on July 15, 2014 at 6:12 pm

I agree.

Reply

15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person by Carey Nieuwhof APRIL 5, 2013

(<http://christianfamilyonchristsmision.com/15-characteristics-of-todays-unchurched-person-by-carey-nieuwhof-april-5-2013/>) on April 16, 2014 at 7:20 pm

[...] Link to original article [...]

Reply

15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person | Greatest Love (<http://ruehg.wordpress.com/2014/04/16/15-characteristics-of-todays-unchurched-person/>) on April 16, 2014 at 3:33 pm

[...] 15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person [...]

[Reply](#)

unchurchme on April 7, 2014 at 3:16 am

"It is an act of charity to cry out when the wolves are amoung the sheep."

St.Francis

[Reply](#)

unchurchme on April 7, 2014 at 3:15 am

Your consensus on the unchurched is rather condescending. Unchurched is not atheist, not nominal christians, but "unincorporated" churched-they are a distinction from your protestant dribble. The authority of the Church is G-d-and the Sovereign Christ. Not, I repeat, not incorporated voluntary subjects of the state. The "United States" incorporated in 1871. Each state is incorporated-and protestants subject themselves to the State and under

the united nations, protestants incorporate to them as subjects as council of churches. Romans 13—is not applicable to Christians—it only applies to Romans. If the Bible/scripture is sacred writings, then why will you not accept Gospel of Thomas, Barnabus, as sacred. Protestants worship the bible that the Roman Catholics made (480), and then omitted Maccabees, and Daniel 13. Protesting Rome is not a Christian principle, if Romans 13 is to be applied: Please subject yourselves to Rome(Vatican) as authorities ‘that G-d placed in position.’ (see Roman 13). I know, lowly protestant man, your interpretation is by the holy spirit, and you subject yourselves to Business leaders who started your “church.” If the cities do not have to pay tax...churches are exempt—unless they are incorporated, then they need an attorney from the BAR association, unchurched means not INC.

Canada is just as bad as the states...the RCMP takes children, they beat citizens, they destroy books sent to copyright office, and the courts take your earnings based upon false legal precedence, in their court of admiralty. Sitting in a pew, safe and secure, because you submit your false church, means you allow by consent to harm others whom you deem “unchurched.” Tithe to people not corporations. When you begin to have a sovereign church, a flock will appear...unchurched only see the state and the flag on the alter: unincorporate and “experience” what Christ went through for you!

It

Reply

unchurchme on April 7, 2014 at 2:51 am

hey

Reply



elaine1leach on February 27, 2014 at 10:03 am

Southern Lady, I am so sorry that this is what you received from the above. As a Christian, my personal goal is to tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened in my life, and that is Jesus. Our best witness is our lives and, unfortunately, Christians are failing in this regard. We have become like the world, totally against the teachings of Jesus. I love you and I don't even know you.....God loves the entire world and wants, as their creator, to bless them and help them and give them everything. I pray that one day you may know our Savior, Jesus, as your personal friend too. May God bless you.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on February 27, 2014 at 8:24 pm

Elaine...thank you so much for this.

Reply

Southern Lady on February 27, 2014 at 8:52 am

I abhor the arrogance of your assumption that people need or want to hear about your religious views as posited in the first sentence. The world would be a far better place if you Christians just put a lid on it. Your use of "un" – anything is off-putting, belittling, and symptomatic of real reasons many people turn from organized religion – the constant categorization and us-vs-them mentality.

Reply

11 Traits Of Churches That Will Impact The Future | Brian Dodd on Leadership

(<http://www.briandoddonleadership.com/2014/01/22/11-traitsofchurchesthatwillimpactthefuture/>) ON February 12, 2014 at 10:34 pm

[...] 11. A tailored experience, not a tailored message. You don't have to tailor the message to unchurched people (see what Andy Stanley says about that here), but churches that have an impact will tailor the experience. There were presents under my tree last Christmas. But I'm not a shopping mall fan. 90% of my gift buying happened online. The content was the same – the experience changed. Churches that decide they will hold the message sacred but tailor the experience to an ever shifting culture will be more effective (here, by the way, are 15 characteristics of today's unchurched people). [...]

Reply

Ron Tant on January 24, 2014 at 11:38 am

I agree. My former church indebted itself greatly when the US economy was flush, and now spends much of its energy trying to "fill the pews" to pay the bills. If it were a movie house, the attitude would be understandable. I doubt I will return to a 'bricks and mortar' church environment. I will seek a group that challenges me to understand myself and help others, without paying for the Emperor's new clothes.

Reply

ihen1 on December 15, 2013 at 4:00 pm

This is a truly excellent list! When we speak of people who not have a church home, we use "unchurched" to mean folk who have no real experience with a congregation in the Christian tradition, but may hold some sort of Christian faith in their hearts and actions, "dechurched" for people who were involved and left (for whatever reason) and "non churched" for people who have no real exposure to any form of Christianity at all. It is very helpful to know where people are in these categories before saying or doing too much. The hardest challenge is the dechurched who may have been badly hurt by their experiences.

Reply

Guest on September 21, 2014 at 2:49 pm

I'm dechurched! I dropped out of church after I graduated from college in the early 1990s. The church had a youth group, a college group, and then a really scary singles group I didn't want to join. The only other options for people my age were the newly marrieds – which I wasn't one, so no dice. I tried fitting in by just joining a long term Wednesday night bible study (It was a "Bethel Bible Study" series), but I was the youngest person in the room, and all the Baby Boomers weren't really avid to get to

know me. I showed up faithfully every week – for the entire 2 year duration of the study. I made zero new friends. When it was over, I just gave up on church entirely. If they didn't want me to be there, then I didn't want to be there either. I am not one to force myself onto people who don't want me around. It was pretty clear from the lack of Sunday School and Bible study group options that someone of my age and marital status was simply not welcome. I haven't joined a church since then. I have visited a few. None of them have Sunday School or small group or Bible study classes for my age/marital status (they do, however, go out of their way to provide fellowship opportunities for just about every other demographic). I'm a 45 year old Gen X'er who has not married or had children. I'm the least welcome demographic of all! I think singles, especially in my age group, find it impossible to get involved in church, because most churches erect invisible (to them) battlements to keep us out. There are alternatives to church if you still want fellowship. I can think of just a few off-hand: joining a parachurch service ministry, attending events at retreat centers, joining or creating a prayer group or meetup, joining a lay religious order such as the Benedictines/Order of St. Luke (etc.), sign up to audit a class at a local Bible college, take a class at the Upper Room's Academy for Spiritual Formation, start a prayer group or join an existing one (contemplativeoutreach.org has groups all over the world), start or join a "Red Tent" (if you're a woman), attend or volunteer at a conference (Promise Keepers if you're a guy; Joyce Meyer's "Love Life" conferences for women, etc etc). There are myriad ways to enjoy fellowship, even if every single local church in your area is hostile and mean to you. You can still have fellowship, with or without an actual

church. If you still want a church, join a new one. Church plants are brand new, need lots of volunteers and organizers, and if you are not passive, you can get involved and get connected very quickly. Older, established churches are not as open to newcomers.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 21, 2014 at 5:43

pm

I am so sorry to hear about your experience with churches. That's got to be heartbreakin. Thanks for continuing to try and believe. I just wished it was different. I really do. God sees your heart.

And for sure there are other options. You list some great ones. I dream of the day when the local church is all it can—and should—be. And I'll do everything I can to help it become that.

[Reply](#)

james on October 29, 2014 at 6:50 pm

Dear Friend your story moved me

Reply

yup on December 15, 2013 at 2:54 am

i hate to break the number of comments already here (69) but maybe this comment relative enough for such a disgrace/possible lack of tact. If God's real then maybe he's just really not a nice guy. I'm gonna create a world of inferior beings that supposedly have free will but if they don't love me and worship me they will be subjected to the most terrible mental and physical torture literally forever once their body stops functioning. Well maybe we could turn a blind eye on what appears to be an insanely jealous and narcissistic attitude and lack of respect for individuals if it was a small percentage of his creation that were damned. However.... considering the full history of the earth (or what we know of it at least), a very very small amount of people are actually getting into heaven. Why would a loving god create so much misery and terrible suffering through his design when he could have just done nothing, or maybe created a better system that doesn't have obvious evidence of a manmade construction based off of time-specific philosophy. This is not to say that something didn't create the universe, i don't believe that something came from nothing, but that doesn't mean that you found the correct answer in Christianity. Maybe your life isn't supposed to be fulfilling, maybe you aren't supposed to be filled with an all consuming sense

of purpose accompanied by an objective source of morality/ethics. Maybe you simply are a product of matter and motion. Time and change. Maybe to call yourself a person is simply an empirical generality to describe how matter behaves and that each choice you make defines 'who' you are, yada yada [insert more existentialism]. But certainly, there seems a mystical quality to this place the universe. So just know that the guy who wrote this knows he could be entirely wrong about every single thing he just said, and in fact, most certainly is.

Reply

yup on December 15, 2013 at 2:58 am

typos, sorry about that

Reply



elaine1leach on February 27, 2014 at 10:07 am

Would you take advice on how to run your car from a baker? God is our creator and wanted us to Love, and thus serve, Him in this life. He knows what we need, what we want, what motivates us, etc., etc. He wants to provide for us, heal us, protect us, feed

us, take care of us. He gave us every instruction we need in His Word, the Bible. God is love.....His people have let the world down, not Him. God bless you!

[Reply](#)

Andrea on December 4, 2013 at 2:53 pm

I'm enjoying reading about some of the information you're presenting about the unchurched on your website. A friend recently brought up the fact that many Canadians are unchurched and it peeked my interest. I only began attending church at the age of 26 (I'm 38 now). I live in NC and most of the Christians I know grew up in church, so sometimes it can be a bit isolating when friends talk about childhood church experiences. Perhaps this is an area where I can serve and lead the unchurched to Jesus. Thanks for the info and insight. □

[Reply](#)

Solemn Bastion on November 27, 2013 at 8:46 pm

My wife and I are unchurched. We are devout. In fact, as devout as the most devout Christian I have ever known, and sadly I have only known a few. I was raised Baptist, moved into Charismatic circles, then Orthodox circles (where I was tonsured as a monk), before leaving organized religion altogether 20 years ago. If no one else is saying it, I believe there is a growing number of us who are neither Catholic nor Protestant nor Orthodox who spend time with the Lord constantly, take our own Holy Communion at home (not symbolically as many Christians choose to believe), study the Bible daily, depend upon Rhema and dreams and visions and other gifts of the Holy Spirit for our hope of perfection in Him, offer the proof of healing the sick and casting out demons and even raising the dead to any who need to see the power of God, and live in the Kingdom of Heaven now, and forever. One proof of our devotion to Jesus is the fact that we are under constant demonic attack to have our marriage torn asunder. We belong only to the Church made up of the Cloud of Witnesses and all true believers on Earth and also those who have not heard but who follow natural law (these God brings to Himself, as the Bible teaches us).



Reply

Richard on May 30, 2014 at 4:44 pm

I love the fact that you are depending on the Holy Spirit, reading your Bible daily, and taking Communion. As a pastor, I can tell you that the church in America desperately needs you. I can understand frustration with organized religion. Sometimes it becomes

way too stale. But we need people who actually care about the Bible, love and serve God daily, and actually take spiritual warfare spiritually. But they are not in the larger church. We need to be a body, as no passage in the New Testament (or Old) indicates to me that we were meant to be alone in our faith. PLEASE rejoin a church and bring something of the Holy Spirit to it.

Reply

Scáth Beorh (<http://beorh.wordpress.com/>) on October 4, 2014 at 6:18 pm

Too difficult to do, but thank you for caring. He will come soon.

Reply

nondescript1010 on September 28, 2013 at 8:36 pm

The term "Unchurched" seems too vague to me. It can mean anything from a devout Christian who doesn't believe in worshiping in a church to an all out atheist. You really cannot say much about such a wide

swath of people. Since I am an “all out atheist” and know a lot of other atheists, I’ll speak to that end of the spectrum. Here is my critique of your “characteristics”.

1. They don’t all have big ‘problems’.

I find that people have the same about of big and little problems, no matter what their religious belief or lack of them are.

2. They feel less guilty than you think

Well, we feel less guilty about not following your dogma than you think. There is plenty of other reasons to feel guilty about various things. Our basis for morality might be different, but most of us reach consensus on most of what we think of as good or bad.

3. Occasional is regular.

I have visited churches for various reasons, but even among my various atheist groups, I’m not a “regular”. Some are. Most atheists shy away from anything that smells like indoctrination.

4. Most are spiritual

Some atheists call themselves “spiritual”, though the meaning differs. I find that when people use the word, they basically equate it with “emotional”. This is true of theists and non-theists I know.

5. They are not sure what "Christian" means

Um, no. Most people, at least in this country, grew up in Christian households. Even if they didn't, they have been exposed to the various tenets and myths through their lives. In fact, I know more about Christianity now than I ever did as a Christian. When you are a Christian, you rarely have to think about why you believe what you do. As an atheist in a religious society, I am often challenged about my beliefs and usually by Christians. So, I have had to learn more about Christianity just to defend my own worldview.

6. You can't call them back to something they never knew

Again, don't assume their ignorance.

7. Many have tried church, even a little, but left

Again, most grew up with church.

8. Something is generous

Most of us don't count money given to churches as charity. Only a small percentage of church income goes to charity. Most of it goes to proselytizing. We tend to try to give more directly and intelligently to charity.

9. They want you to be Christian

Actually, I find that those that do not follow their “scriptures” closely are much more humane than those that do. I would befriend a member of a Unitarian church or United Church of Christ much more readily than someone from Westboro Baptist Church. This holds true of other religions, too. So please, don’t be too Christian.

10. They’re intelligent, so speak to that

I try not to assume the intelligence of anybody until they show it one way or another. There was a study that shows that atheists are more intelligent than theists, but I think that is more cultural than any kind of inherent thing.

11. They hate hypocrisy

Who doesn’t?

12. They love transparency

Ditto.

13. They invite their friends if they like what they’re discovering

Again, who doesn’t?

14. Their spiritual growth trajectory varies dramatically

Per what I said earlier, I find “spiritual growth trajectory” a meaningless phrase.

15. Some want to be anonymous and some don’t

Atheists tend to call themselves many things for many reasons. I prefer atheist. Some prefer agnostic, free thinker, or other term. I also consider myself a Secular Humanist. Atheism is just a statement of one particular lack of belief that I have. It doesn’t say much about me. In fact, you’ll find that atheists don’t inherently have much in common with each other. Secular Humanism is a label that states something about some beliefs I do hold.

I hope this gives you some insight from this end of the spectrum of “Unchurched”. Leave a message...

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 30, 2013 at 10:48 am

I wish I knew your real name, because I'd like to say a more personal thank you. But thank you. I really appreciate this thoughtful response, whoever you are.

[Reply](#)

nondescript1010 on September 30, 2013 at 11:01 am

You're welcome. I'm glad you got something helpful from my response.

[Reply](#)

katie99 on March 6, 2014 at 12:34 pm

I have often found when someone says "Unitarian," they generally mean "Unitarian Universalist" as it is more common than the Unitarian Christian denomination. It should be noted that UU is not a Christian religion at all (something else that is often a point of confusion, especially since many UU congregations are called "churches") but its own distinct religion that grew out of two very progressive Christian denominations. UU members have a wide variety of beliefs, and many (such as myself) are actually atheists when it comes to belief in god/gods/other supernatural concepts. We are united by common values that are largely reflective of Secular Humanism, but with room made for a variety of spiritual beliefs.

That said, I find both the Unitarian and Universalist Christian denominations to be pretty awesome, and realize it's possible you were referring to the former.

[Reply](#)

Jayson on September 9, 2013 at 9:51 pm

Hi Carey. I'm a former Christian who was very active in my church and its mission. I am now an atheist. You say people should be offended if people think they are atheist. Why do you feel that way? Atheists are just another part of your community and I see no reason for them to feel the term is offensive, just descriptive. Thanks!

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on September 10, 2013 at 7:28 am

Jayson..thanks. For sure. An atheist who is an atheist isn't offended at all by the term. I was trying to point to pastors and Christians who just assume that most people who don't go to church are atheists or don't believe in God. Many consider themselves

'spiritual' and not atheist, and they tend to get offended when Christians equate not going to church with not being spiritual. Hope that clarifies things.

[Reply](#)

steve h on August 28, 2013 at 10:55 am

If you want to connect with people, I wouldn't start by labeling them "un" anything. It's a real turnoff. It projects a sense that you think you are superior. My first reaction to your 15 characteristics of the "unchurched" is to put together 15 characteristics of the "churched" – and it wouldn't be very flattering.

[Reply](#)

Solemn Bastion on November 27, 2013 at 8:54 pm

"Unchurched" was first used in Orthodox Christian circles, I believe. It seems to be a very old term, like their other strange one, 'unmercenaries,' or people who did not mix their calling with making money.

[Reply](#)

The Unchurched | Christian Pundit (<http://christianpundit.wordpress.com/2013/08/08/3866/>) on August 7, 2013 at 9:25 pm

[...] (Link): 15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person [...]

[Reply](#)

renewal on August 2, 2013 at 1:01 am

"Church" to me is a building and the people congregating in it, many of which are less "Christian like" than those that don't attend. It is governed by conferences/big businesses that take a % of the tithing and in our case spend, if memory serves me, \$225,000/year on maintenance of the Conference recreation center ++ The woods, near a stream etc to me is being closer to God than sitting in some churches....not all, but the one I grew up in, which has changed dramatically through the years.

Just recently the D.S. gave a sermon before a conference meeting in which he touted that humans are God's chosen one's/favorite, animals being lower etc..."God did not die on the cross to save dolphin's did he?" to quote one of his statements. I sat there appalled, thinking

this man is a blithering idiot and apparently Methodists are supposed to believe Speciesism as well. It is things like this that turn people off from "church".

I prefer to subscribe to people like Wayne Dyer although I do enjoy watching & reading the books of Joel Osteen, as well. They are inspiring to me.

[Reply](#)

JimA on July 17, 2013 at 6:57 pm

Maybe as a part of #14...With their best interest in mind, also give some consideration to offramps, how to suggest an alternative nurturing setting for those who might be struggling to thrive in this particular one.

[Reply](#)

JimA on July 16, 2013 at 8:11 pm

I'm a latecomer to this good discussion.

Perhaps missing are:

- 1) Conversation communicates better than lecture/transmit. Just watch where the energy develops in the two different kinds of settings.
- 2) Familiarity with stories and teachings of Scripture (or tradition) cannot be assumed. Additional context is required when making reference to "prodigal son", and in familiar service observances.
- 3) Offering of the Gospel by invitation to consider becoming a "follower of Jesus" (may not be the same as a traditional end-of-service invitation into redemptive salvation and/or membership). What some have dismissively labeled "cafeteria Christianity" seems to me to be a good thing, indicating a more personal, rationalized, internalized, and evolving spiritual formation, ...as contrasted with concurrence and compliance with a well-defined, inherited faith.

Reply



cnieuwhof on July 17, 2013 at 4:38 pm

I appreciate your points Jim. I'm thinking #3 might be a both/and, not an either or.

Reply

JimA on July 17, 2013 at 6:44 pm

Yes, I agree, but probably greater than two in number of mutually respectful distinctive expressions, even within a given tradition. We might consider the notion of organizationally helping each follower find the setting that nurtures them best. Contrast that with focus on retention.

I'm still working at how to articulate the #3. It might be something like:

Expect each enquirer's belief system to be, and continue to be idiosyncratic and restless (not neatly or completely rationalized and expressible). Expect strong internalization ("ownership") of that system, as contrasted with concurrence with a prescribed tradition. But expect it also to be more malleable and perpetually restless over time (their own timetable) than what we may traditionally expect. Expect this to be true, but in varying extents.

Still ruminating.....

Reply

The 411: July 11, 2013 | Phil Wages • Senior Pastor, Winterville FBC (<http://philwages.wordpress.com/2013/07/11/the-411-july-11-2013/>) on July 15, 2013 at 10:06 am

[...] 15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person [...]

[Reply](#)**Kati.batil** on July 8, 2013 at 8:26 pm

You forgot a characteristic of the 'unchurched' – many of them are Christians. I think 'Unchurched' is a narrow minded term that assumes that church is what makes someone a Christian or not. That's not biblical at all. This is just another example of how the church is where many attitudes such as this "them vs. us" develop. Spend some time trying to actually get to know this so called "unchurched" group (without trying to convert them) and I think you'll find that they don't quite fit into a neat little box of stereotypes that you've created.

[Reply](#)**cnieuwhof** on July 10, 2013 at 6:38 am

Thanks for the question/challenge. Unchurched does not mean unChristian. It means they are simply not attending church. And one of the challenges I would have for Christians not attending church is an encouragement to either join one, start one or in some way figure out a way to carry out the mission Christ gave to his followers. That may look very different than the current church but it can't simply be to say you believe and engage in no mission. Not saying this is what you do all Kati (I'm sure it's not) but it is a growing phenomenon.

Reply



Pam on August 31, 2013 at 11:22 pm

So this brings up an interesting question... Do we need four walls and a roof to be called a church? It is easily argued that the church that Jesus calls us to build is not confined to a building. Could this possibly be another reason we are not reaching the Mosaics? They want the flexibility of meeting at a friends house, in a coffee shop, at the park, etc. Jesus went to the people, maybe we should too?

Reply

Solemn Bastion on November 27, 2013 at 8:51 pm

You said: "in some way figure out a way to carry out the mission Christ gave to his followers."

Precisely what my wife and I are doing. We take the Great Commission quite seriously, still being unchurched.

[Reply](#)

Free Flow Friday!!! « Intentional Pastoring (<http://matthewsperson.wordpress.com/2013/06/14/free-flow-friday-4/>)
on June 14, 2013 at 9:35 am

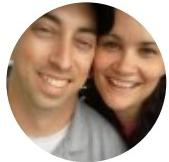
[...] 15 Characteristics of Today's Unchurched Person by Carey [...]

[Reply](#)

Brian Newman on June 5, 2013 at 6:36 pm

Christianity is not about going to heaven. Christianity is about drawing on the strength of God to live a good life (a life filled with the fruits of the spirits, taking care of the widows and orphans, etc.) – a righteous life, a sacred life. It acknowledges that we are all error-prone, but focuses on the constant pursuit of a good life. So, don't talk to them about going to heaven. Talk to them about the church as a place where everyone works together, strives together, supports one another (in a spirit of humility) to achieve a good life. Without a constant effort to live a good life (and making amends/repenting when we fall short), we won't get to heaven. Going to heaven is a side effect of being a Christian and should not be the cause cé·lè·bre many treat it as.

Reply



Alan on April 27, 2014 at 10:22 am

Brian, That almost sounds like our living a good life is what earns us a way to heaven. Or that God's goal for saving us is so that we'll be "good people." I understand there are verses that support that. I'm not certain that's the overall message of Christianity. Christianity – and this is simply my paraphrased understanding – is: We're dead inside. We try to find life through anything else (relationships, charity, humanism). What God does is restore life back into the depths of our being. Being filled with life and reconnected to the source of life, through salvation, we can grow and live a life that is

truly "alive." Life spreads life and a person who is truly alive will have fruits of the spirit, good works, etc. You're right. Heaven is a side effect. But the good life comes after receiving the true Life that Christianity promises.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 27, 2014 at 12:55 pm

Alan, this is an extremely helpful short summary of the Gospel. Right on. Thank you!— Sent from Mailbox

Reply

Brian Newman on April 27, 2014 at 2:25 pm

There is Christianity as a religion and there is Christianity as a spiritual dedication. Regarding Christianity as a religion; James 1:27 _Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world_. This is what Christianity should focus on. By doing so, we begin to express the fruits of the

spirit in our lives. There are two halves of Christianity. As for Christianity as a spiritual dedication, surrendering ourselves and our egos to Christ leads to us expressing the fruits of the spirit in our lives. If we aren't expressing those fruits in our lives in everything we do, then we don't have a relationship with Christ. As for restoring our spiritual lives, when we are spiritually alive, we are producing the fruits of the spirit in everything we do.

Reply



Luke on May 29, 2013 at 12:59 am

Carey,

Thank you so much. I'd love it if you would flesh out what # 14 looks like.

Luke

Reply



cnieuwhof on May 29, 2013 at 9:28 am

Sure. I think people come in at different points. Some have zero knowledge of Christianity, some have a base knowledge. And people mature at different rates. Our groups model helps people mature spiritually at a pace that's different for each person. Maturity takes time, and once leaders recognize that, it makes it easier on everyone.

Reply

joey on May 14, 2013 at 8:52 am

this is great stuff and so true. sharing this for sure.

joey

-www.un-learning.org

Reply

John Hambrick (<http://twitter.com/jambric>) on April 21, 2013 at 1:11 pm

Invaluable, especially for those of us working with Starting Point or similar environments.
Thank you!

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 21, 2013 at 11:34 pm

John...that means so much. Thank you! I can't say enough good things about Starting Point. So appreciate what you and the team are sharing with us. It's changing lives.

[Reply](#)

Lawrence W. Wilson (<http://www.lawrencewilson.com/p/about-me.html>) on April 12, 2013 at 12:50

pm

Regarding #2, my sense is that most people, churched or unchurched, don't have a significant problem with guilt—and not just about church attendance. That makes evangelism a challenge for those of us schooled to present guilt as the problem and forgiveness as the solution. I'm curious to know how others are dealing with this, namely, how we conceive of the "good news" that we are offering. As reconciliation? Purpose? Justice? Interested to hear your thoughts.

[Reply](#)

Narrow Gauge (<http://twitter.com/NarrowGauge>) on April 12, 2013 at 11:32 pm

The longer I walk with God, the more I realize that there is a reason for the cross, beyond the forgiveness of our sins. That's why it is called a new birth. This is the beginning of a new life.

In order to fully understand the Christian life, I think it is helpful to understand why God created humanity in the first place. Christianity is not a new direction for humanity. It is an invitation to come back to God's design and purpose for us. In the beginning he made us and had a plan for how the human race should live. He even spelled it out for us.

I think framing the discussion around world view is better. We all have to choose a path or course to navigate through the murky waters of life. All of us are desperately searching for it. We are not all aware of our desperate need for Christ's work on the Cross, but we are aware that things are not as they should be.

Someone once said that the purpose of life is to live it! The question is how best to do that. Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for our sins, and our embracing of the forgiveness he alone offers opens up the best possible path we could ever choose.

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 13, 2013 at 9:47 am

Well said.

[Reply](#)

Lawrence W. Wilson (<http://www.lawrencewilson.com/p/about-me.html>) on April 14,

2013 at 7:09 pm

I like that thought. I also am more and more drawn to Jesus' vision for reconciliation—meaning bringing people together with one another as well as with God. This is something that people seem to hunger for, though they can't always name it.

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on April 13, 2013 at 9:48 am

I'm struggling to come up with a vocabulary that connects with 'successful' people. I think in an affluent society, preachers today run into the same problem Jesus did – the rich hear the Gospel less readily than the poor or needy. And yet of course, we all need it. The parable of the sower comforts me on days when I get discouraged.

Reply



Lawrence W. Wilson (<http://www.lawrencewilson.com/p/about-me.html>) on April 14,

2013 at 7:07 pm

Yes, well put.

Reply

Raybo57 on May 11, 2013 at 11:46 am

In the last few weeks, since Easter, I have been using the term, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, but to make dead people alive." I think one reason people don't have a guilt problem is they can always find someone who is "Badder" than them, Hitler is always the ending point in making anyone feel as thought they are OK. But you can't be a little dead, dead is dead and that is a great starting point to tell how we all are looking for life. We buy stuff to feel alive, we do stuff to feel alive, so I have been sharing that, that "Alive" we are looking for is only found in a relationship with God, through the ""Life" giving gift of Jesus. Ephesians 2

Reply



Carey Nieuwhof on May 11, 2013 at 12:11 pm

Ray...I love that. What a great phrase. Thanks for sharing it.

Reply

ruis2002 on April 11, 2013 at 11:17 pm

"Unchurched" is a funny word. Does it mean Christians who stopped going to church? People who grew up in nonreligious households and never attended a church in the first place? People who have relocated to a new town and don't have a local church in that town? Unchurched people aren't a monolithic group. A childhood friend of mine is very Christian, married to a man with a theology degree, and they are "shopping around" for a "church home" and are having difficulty finding a place to belong. They are the church's "ideal" nuclear family with 2 or 3 children. I'm not sure why they haven't found a church they like yet. I have other childhood friends who were baptized in a church, and married in a church, and that's about the extent of their lifetime involvement (they are mostly Baptists!). I am an unmarried woman in my mid-forties. I grew up going to church every Sunday. It was the Methodist church my parents picked out when they got married in the 1960s. My younger brothers were happy and made lots of friends at that church. I always had a sense I didn't really fit in to my Sunday School class (part of the problem was that I attended a different – competing – school, so the kids in my class were one big clique that didn't include me). I persisted in attending church services, although in high school I gave up on my Sunday School class and just hung out in the church library – reading – during the Sunday School hour. When I was a college student, one of my brothers fell in with the wrong crowd at high school. I noticed his behavior change, but my parents laughed at me when I told them I thought he might be using. He nearly OD'd on drugs. My parents never saw it coming and it really broke them. My mother (of the generation of women whose whole identity depended on the success or failure of her kids) just couldn't face their friends at church any more, or answer questions about how her kids were doing. So, they stopped attending the Methodist church. They started going to another church – basically, the Baptist church next door. They

have been "visitors" there for probably 20 years now. I think they don't want to be re-baptized, so they haven't officially joined. The Baptists always want you to be re-baptized, if you come from another denomination. It is an annoying peculiarity, that is somewhat off-putting. I like their Baptist church, however. It has a very good feeling about it. It's large, and I don't know anyone there, but it seems very welcoming, without putting visitors on the spot. I tried to continue attending the Methodist church, on my own, for several years. I finally gave up in the mid-1990s. The church became very large, it was growing, but they were pretty much marketing themselves to young married couples with 2.5 children. Since I was single, and still am, I just felt very out of place there. I was uncomfortable, at first, attending without my family. Gradually, it became very painful to sit through services, all alone, not recognizing anyone, and feeling more isolated than if I had just stayed home and watched church services on T.V. So, I gave up and stayed home on Sundays, and watched church on T.V. I have visited a few other churches in the years since, but none felt like home. For one thing, most Sunday school classes are based on age, marital status and/or motherhood. I am single, never married, and do not have kids. I can't fit into the young couples group, the young singles group, the older widows group, the young mothers group or the single mothers group. There is no place for me! I would point out that since 40% of women in their early forties right now have NEVER had children, that it would be a great idea for churches to focus less on organizing women's Sunday School classes along the lines of marital status and motherhood. Themed Bible study classes that are open to all ages and stages are the way to go. Our culture is changing. Gen X either didn't get married at all, or married too young and

got divorced. Gen Y has moved in with their parents, and might never be able to marry at all. How will your churches grow if you continue to market yourself primarily to the nuclear families? They are all but extinct.

[Reply](#)

perc2100 on May 11, 2013 at 8:40 pm

I took “unchurched” to mean either those who might believe in God but don’t ‘subscribe’ to a specific religion, or even those who might consider themselves Christian but haven’t gone to church in ages. I’ve not heard of the term before this blog, and I think it’s an interesting alternative to using a more potentially offensive term like ‘godless’ or ‘atheist’ or something else.

[Reply](#)

Madeline Jean on April 11, 2013 at 2:12 pm

"Most are spiritual. Most unchurched people believe in some kind of God. They're surprised and offended if you think of them as atheists. As they should be." – Excuse me, but you are confusing spirituality with theism (believing in the existence of a god or gods). Spirituality is what gives one's life meaning, and does not require belief in a deity. It goes beyond religious affiliation, striving for harmony with the universe: nature, the arts, philosophy, and our relationship to all living things. I could go on, but I hope you understand my point. I am an atheist and I'm spiritual. Why should I be surprised or offended if you think of me as an atheist? What's so offensive about that?

Reply



cnieuwhof on April 11, 2013 at 4:38 pm

Thanks for your comment Madeline Jean. Appreciate the insight.

Reply

Madeline Jean on April 11, 2013 at 5:27 pm

Haha alright, you're welcome. :3

[Reply](#)

For Him,Whom my soul loveth on May 10, 2013 at 12:29 pm

Because you deny the creator from whom all things are patterned. The ultimate artist. Spirituality, as you call it, is acknowledging the commonality of the Universe, but denying The force that made it common.

[Reply](#)

Madeline Jean on June 2, 2013 at 2:43 am

And this “force that made it common” is automatically the Judeo-Christian god, why? I have no reason to believe in that particular creator among the thousands of other deities humans worship and have worshipped throughout history. And no, a book written by *humans* in an uneducated land thousands of years ago that claims itself to be true, doesn’t mean it is actually true.

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on June 4, 2013 at 6:45 am

Madeline, I would encourage you to read the Bible a little more deeply. To say that those who wrote it were uneducated is a little simplistic. Even many non-Christians would concede the Bible contains some of the greatest wisdom recorded. I believe it points to God as revealed in Jesus, but even if you don't, the scriptures provide keen insights into life.

Reply

John on June 18, 2013 at 4:37 pm

I hope I am responding to Madeline Jean. To say, "we live in a very complex world" is an "understatement." The world confronts us with so many philosophical points of view. One's view of things depends on what we use to interpret what is around. How do we test, or is even possible to put something to the test to verify and or justify our point of view of the world and the universe? Really there are two points of view when it comes view life and the world around us. It is either theistic or it is atheistic. The debate goes on and on. There are those who view life without God being a part of the equation, and there are those who view life with

God being behind the equation. If one is convinced there is no God it becomes pretty simple, we live, we breath and we die and after that we die. Thus we adopt the ancient view of the Greeks and the Romans, "We eat and drink for tomorrow we die." If one's view is theistic, then which deity(s) are we to believe in. If there is a deity, can we know who this deity is? If this deity can be known, does this deity have a way for us to know what this deity would want us to know? Does it make any difference if this deity can be known and or even wants to be known and if so, how would such a deity make us to know? What if this deity could be known and to believed in so that a person could say, "I know in whom I have believed and I am persuaded of who He is and what He has done for me, but also for you." If there is such a God and one is convinced He is God and He knows me and loves me and He proven beyond even reasonable doubt this is true then what? If He is all knowing and all powerful and if He is everywhere present; then what?

It seems a fair question. Is there any evidence for such a God that even a man of science would consider such evidence as proof for such a God as this could or does exist? What about someone like Johannas Kepler most certainly one of the most brilliant of scientist and maybe even the most brilliant? He was absolutely sure such a God does exist and He lived his life so that his work would glorify God. He was the only scientist who thought and believed like he believed and studied. To study true science used to mean to study the thoughts of an all knowing and all powerful God. Copernicus, Michael Angelo, Leonardo Devinchi (sp) were among many scientist who lived between the thirteenth and eighteenth

centuries, and they held similar view as Kepler who possibly was the brightest of them all. Oh what I would not give to have had such a brilliant mind and believe in an all powerful, all knowing and everywhere present God who loved me. I do not have their brilliance but I am persuaded like them that God loves me, knows me by name just like those men of brilliance believed. If facts do matter I know by documentation these men so confessed such belief before the world in which they lived. I wonder why this side of these men is not known today about these true men of science who had true faith in God. If you are an honest atheist and thus open to reconsider your views you might want to consider the honest atheistic attorneys Lord Littleton and his friend (I cannot recall his name at the moment) who set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle who on the road to Damascus met and was converted by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. One set to disprove the resurrection and the other set out to disprove Paul's conversion. They did their studies independent of each other. When they met to share the result of their investigation of their independent subject to disprove these two historical events they both were converted to faith in Christ and were convinced of who Jesus Christ was and that He indeed was risen from the dead and did in fact meet on the road of Damascus to convert his vociferous opponent Saul of Tarsus who became the greatest of all ambassadors of Jesus Christ. There is no other God who is so verifiable as the God of the Christian faith and how glad I am that He loves me, as well as the entire human race and that I have been baptized in His

NAME (note singular) the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (note plurality) Trinity. Oh that I could sing His NAME more adequately, GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY.

Reply

William Pardy on July 13, 2013 at 10:48 am

interesting that you think people from history were uneducated. that is a bold statement. not to mention we have seen structures from ancients proving that they, were capable of reason and understanding in art, architecture, communication, and so on...so why not religion, spirituality, and philosophy.

Reply

Teresita Matos on July 22, 2013 at 2:09 pm

I can relate to your statement as a former atheist (now a Christian at Seminary) I also find insight in your comment as I was a non-spiritual atheist. There are nuances to all forms of belief. Spirituality is so complex, and yet so simple. I think we make a lot of

assumptions about people's spiritual journeys and your comment warns us about that.
To Carey Nieuwhof: Great article! <http://poeticprophecy.blogspot.com/>
[\(http://poeticprophecy.blogspot.com/\)](http://poeticprophecy.blogspot.com/)

[Reply](#)

Ariel Hirsch (<http://www.facebook.com/arielgayle>) on April 11, 2013 at 2:09 pm

Carey, I just subscribed to your blog yesterday and I am absolutely loving it. I have already read several of your blogs and am looking forward to many more! Thank you so much for your insights and your leadership!

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on April 11, 2013 at 4:40 pm

Ariel...thanks for the encouragement and feedback. I'm grateful to be able to share my thoughts and love the growing community we have here among readers. Welcome to the journey!

[Reply](#)

Robert Goeringer (<http://authorhouse.com/>) on April 11, 2013 at 12:35 pm

The book 'Offspring' has been purchased on three continents, spreading God's spiritual truth. God chose me to slate a book for others to understand life and where we shall proceed. God spoke what to title, order of chapters and all words within: here is one of numerous in which God desired quoted.

'What has occurred globally, throughout history remains spiritual through weather and humanism. What we must contemplate is Our future. I have wonderful plans through you and I bless countless humans, from all continents, increasingly further.

Rather than controlled unwell with anxieties, overwhelmedness, anger, impulsivity, thus, chaos in humanism and weather as Satan wants, I, yield calmness, confidence, direction, focus and peace: countless remain aware of My good power. Continue focused on medias depictions, thus, negativity or remain aware of My global plan: calmly embrace and do My will or remain stagnant, distorted through thoughts and feelings, thus, only yours. Living abundantly in My good spirit, negativity decreases through and around you. When praying and praising, you are living perfectly in my good spirit. If reading these words, you shall understand in my time. Life is good and you are enlightened further.'

[\(http://bookstore.authorhouse.com/Products/SKU-000476554/Offspring.aspx\)](http://bookstore.authorhouse.com/Products/SKU-000476554/Offspring.aspx)

Reply

9 Signs Your Church is Ready to Reach Unchurched People | VEFnexus

(<http://vefnexus.wordpress.com/2013/04/11/591/>) on April 11, 2013 at 10:28 am

[...] Part of the problem stems from the fact that many churches don't really understand unchurched people (here's a post on 15 characteristics of today's unchurched person). [...]

Reply

James on April 10, 2013 at 2:55 pm

Perhaps your concept of "church" is too narrow. Perhaps there are people who ponder our place in the universe and the amazing life force that flows through all things differently than you. Perhaps some people consider this process to be private and introspective. There are many people who find understanding of the universe and our place within it through careful observation and experimentation. Why should these people be called "un-churched?" The phrase implies some sort of deficit and is insulting. Perhaps it is you that is "unchurched."

The lack of understanding of the creation that we live within and ignorance of life formation and origins could be perceived as disrespectful of your God's creation. Perhaps this spinning sphere we all live on is the Church, and its secrets and wonders are waiting to be unlocked by careful scientific study. Perhaps the stubborn unwillingness of many Christians to accept scientific fact is an "unchurched" attitude.

Reply



cnieuwhof on April 10, 2013 at 6:19 pm

Hi James. Appreciate your perspective and I know that not everyone shares my world view of the biblical worldview. My vantage point is as understood through scripture, so of course that narrows it right there. Or, as some would say, sometimes its in these limits that we find our freedom.

Reply

For Him, Whom my soul loveth on May 10, 2013 at 12:10 pm

I love your comments. Somewhere in the midst of all science and Faith God Almighty resides. We who are finite seek often to make the Infinite God, finite as well. But we cannot know Him, or relate to Him except we find common ground.

The term "church" as defined in the Christian bible means. "Ecclesia", or "called out ones.". While I do not ascribe to the concepts of "Church" common to the Christian community today, the definition provided by Jesus Himself will suffice. "Whererver two or three are gathered together in my name, there I will be in the midst of them".

Reply

Mark Archibald on April 9, 2013 at 4:32 pm

They are looking for something interactive. This really can go under point 14, as I'm sure not everyone wants an interactive, participatory feel to the service. But as I've talked to a few next gen folks who are either not connected or disconnecting from church, the "sit and stare" feel of church does not always jive with them. The idea of someone teaching in a lecturing style on spiritual things to some seems odd – they want the ability to ask questions, interact, or push back. This may be difficult to implement – you can do some things with twitter, or have a brief Q and A post-service. But other than that it seems all you can do is be 9, 10, 11, and 12! All of those communicate "I'm open for discussion, interaction and debate."

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 10, 2013 at 6:17 pm

Thanks for this Mark. Increasingly we're seeing social media and group take the place of the connection that Sunday morning lacks, even with a Q and A. Social media and groups allow hundreds of people to interact personally.

[Reply](#)

For Him, Whom my soul loveth on May 10, 2013 at 12:33 pm

Ponder if you will the comments form the bible itself on gathering in Jesus name. From I Corinthians 14:26-40 One has a song, one a hymn, one a tongue, one an interpretation, "...." let all be done decently and in order". It is assumed that many, if not all would contribute. Decently,...taking turns, and in order,..,. Perhaps, it is the "Churches themselves who need to consider.
And where , in the churches. Are people prophesying, speaking a tongues, and interpreting, ? And all the other actions spoken of by Jesus.

[Reply](#)

Articles From Around | Art of the Christian Ninja (<http://artofchristianninja.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/articles-from-around-7/>) on April 9, 2013 at 11:00 am

[...] 15 Characteristics or Today's Unchurched Person – "...unchurched people are changing."

[...]

[Reply](#)

Marty Schoenleber Jr (<http://www.facebook.com/ChosenRebel>) on April 7, 2013 at 1:45 pm

Great post Carey. Extremely helpful. I will be chewing on this for days.

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 7, 2013 at 2:43 pm

Thanks Marty.

[Reply](#)

Trevor on April 6, 2013 at 11:08 am

Good points Carey – too often we construct strawman versions of the ‘unchurched’. I think it’s worth recognising that the unchurched aren’t a single, holistic group, any more than the ‘non-Jewish’ or ‘non-Sikh’ are. Christianity is no longer the default, privileged religion of our society, and the world doesn’t divide neatly into two groups – Christian and Other.

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 7, 2013 at 2:43 pm

I agree. I think when I started out my assumption was that unchurched people were unspiritual. That's just not true (anymore). At least not where I live.

[Reply](#)

Bob Cleveland (<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=650802417>) on April 6, 2013 at 10:39 am

This pretty well agrees with what Ed Stetzer pointed out in his book "Lost and Found .. The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Are Reaching Them".

Reply



cnieuwhof on April 7, 2013 at 2:40 pm

Thanks Bob. Haven't read Ed's book but appreciate the connection.

Reply

Ron Baker on April 6, 2013 at 8:04 am

Great article Carey! I'm amazed when I visit a church that tells me they are about reaching the "unchurched" and the whole service has an "in house" feel. There are times for "in house" conversations but if we are going to have a greater impact on that first time person, we must

consider the type of words we use. I think about the old school church mailboxes with the family name on it....it screams us and them! Thanks for keeping the "unchurched" person at the heart of your community!

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on April 7, 2013 at 2:41 pm

So true Ron. Been to that church. □

[Reply](#)



J Calaway on April 6, 2013 at 7:52 am

Carey, This is good good stuff, Point #10 made me smile. For years I have described where to find the passage I am speaking from in the Bible. I will usually start with a little fact about the bible, such as the kinds of books, the authors, how it is arranged, and then state if you aren't very familiar with the bible that's OK we are all learning about it as we go. I get more comments on that 2 or 3 minutes, how that helped than anything else.

It creates a curiosity (thirst) to know more about this book — the bible

Reply



cnieuwhof on April 7, 2013 at 2:42 pm

I think you're right. Being inclusive of non-Christians also speaks to many Christians who might not be sure of the context of a text too.

Reply

Jeremy Postal (<http://twitter.com/JeremyPostal>) on April 5, 2013 at 3:07 pm

Good stuff. The "they/us" language is challenging for me though; I think it shows the difference between being a missionary to a culture and being a missionary in a culture, ya know?

Anyways, I really resonate with the "They want you to be Christian" bit – love that.

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on April 6, 2013 at 6:50 am

Thanks Jeremy. For sure. "They" is never optimal. Wonder how else you might phrase it?

[Reply](#)

Lori Witmer Byron (<http://www.facebook.com/loribyron>) on April 5, 2013 at 1:23 pm

Carey,

This is well written and great article. Thank for sharing these good & very useful points!

~~Lori

[Reply](#)

Greg Martin on April 5, 2013 at 10:13 am

Thanks Carey. I just shared this with everybody I've ever met. GREAT thoughts. #5 was especially helpful to me; as a pastor, I make WAY too many assumptions. Thanks again, and blessings.

[Reply](#)



Matthew Ruttan on April 5, 2013 at 8:53 am

Hi Carey, these are some thoughtful observations, thanks for sharing. I think one thing it can be easy to do is oversimplify people, and you've given some good advice in the other direction.

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on April 6, 2013 at 6:51 am

Thanks Matthew.

[Reply](#)

JTRica on April 15, 2013 at 11:24 am

We all miss the point. Why do they need the gospel or Jesus for that matter? They are not afraid of hell, thank God; they are spiritual, seeing God or Spirit in everything; and Jesus, as much as we like to think he is about all love and sweetness, promises strife and ultimate destruction of all that we love. These deeper questions need to be answered. That is why I find so many young people moving more deeply into Buddhism, Zen or other 'non-deity' specific spiritualities.

Reply

For Him,Whom my soul loveth on May 10, 2013 at 12:56 pm

Do you know Him? Jesus. "II Timothy 1:12b. Timothy spoke of Him, and said "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him". NASB

If you know Him, you love Him, for He is all in all I do not need to fear Hell to believe, I need to know Him...

At this moment there is a "strife". Between you and I.

The Ying and the Yang. Any action has an opposite reaction, otherwise there is no action at all. If the truth indeed sets us free, it will “win out” and some one, or thing will lose. Until things are changed, that is the nature of the universe we live in.

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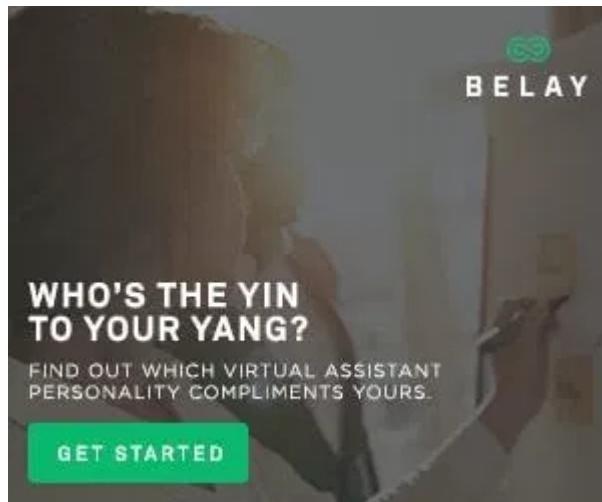
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